

**Travel & Transportation Reform Act**  
***Implementation Procedures***  
Effective for Travel Performed On or After May 1, 2000

**I. Provisions Addressed**

- A. Mandatory Use of the Travel Charge Card (includes relocation travel for en route and house hunting trips only)
- B. Timely employee reimbursement of travel expenses, including late payment penalties

**II. Implementation Procedures**

A. Mandatory Use of the Travel Charge Card (includes relocation travel for en route and house hunting trips only) - The Department's policy dealing with the Mandatory Use of the Charge Card was issued on March 29, 2000.

1. General Exemptions authorized by the General Services Administration:

Use of the Government-sponsored charge card is mandatory for all travel (including relocation travel for house hunting and en route travel) performed by employees except for:

- Expenses incurred at a vendor that does not accept the Government-sponsored travel charge card,
- Laundry/dry cleaning,
- Parking,
- Local transportation systems,
- Taxi,
- Tips,
- Meals (when use of the card is impractical, e.g. group meals or the Government contractor-issued charge card is not accepted),
- Phone calls (when a Government calling card is available for use in accordance with agency policy)
- An employee who has an application pending for the travel charge card,
- Individuals traveling on invitational travel, and
- New appointees (for a period of 30 days after appointment).

## 2. Exemptions From the Mandatory Use of the Travel Card Policy:

Program Assistant Secretaries have been delegated authority to grant exemptions to the Department's mandatory use policy. The procedures governing exemptions are as follows:

- the request must be made in writing by the employee requesting the exemption and be submitted to the appropriate Assistant Secretary for consideration through appropriate intermediate levels,
- if approved, the request will be returned to the requestor with a copy to the Departmental Office of Financial Management (PFM), and
- if approved, all exemptions will be reported by PFM to the General Services Administration within the required 30 days.

### Exemption Requests:

Exemption requests must describe fully the extenuating circumstances beyond the employee's control that preclude the employee from using the Government-sponsored charge card. (A simple refusal to obtain the travel charge card will not constitute grounds for granting an exemption.)

## 3. Penalties for non-compliance with the mandatory use policy:

Formal disciplinary actions should be considered by the employee's immediate supervisor if there is evidence that the charge card was not used for official purposes without an appropriate exemption. Before the immediate supervisor initiates any formal action, and before issuing any notices to the employee, the supervisor must contact the bureau's servicing personnel office to ensure that all the necessary requirements are satisfied and all the appropriate documents are properly prepared. Please refer to the Department's *Handbook on Charges and Penalty Selection for Disciplinary and Adverse Actions*. Such disciplinary action may include:

- Oral or written warning or admonishment;
- Reprimand;
- Suspension;
- Reassignment;
- Reduction in pay; or
- Removal from government office.

## B. Voucher Submission, Payment Tracking, and Late Payment Fee Requirements

### 1. Definitions:

*Proper Voucher* - A voucher that is substantially complete in every material respect (as to documentation and receipts) and which has been signed by the traveler. That is: (1) the trip was authorized and performed; (2) the appropriate receipts/ticket stubs and other required documentation appear to be in order and are attached to the voucher; and (3) the traveler has signed and dated the travel voucher certifying to its correctness (e.g. block 13 SF 1012).

*Designated Approving Office* - The office (location/address) where the designated approving official resides.

*Approving Official* - The person with the authority to review, verify and sign a travel voucher (e.g. Block 14 SF 1012) for travel under his/her span of control.

2. Employees are required to prepare the travel voucher and submit it to their designated approving office within 5 workdays after completion of travel, 30 day segment of extended temporary duty travel, or segment of permanent change of station move. However, it is emphasized that for late payment purposes, the clock begins when the voucher is received by the designated approving office. The voucher must be date stamped when received in the designated approving office. If for some reason the receipt date is not stamped, then the default date will be the date the voucher was signed by the traveler. For tracking purposes the date the voucher is received by the designated approving office will be the “clock” start date for both return of an improper voucher and late payment date. (Note: If the elapsed time between the employee’s signature on the voucher and the receipt date by the approving office is inordinately long, then the approving official should attempt to determine the reason for the delay and take corrective action to prevent similar future recurrences.)

3. Upon submission of the travel voucher, approving officials and employees are to do the following:

- If the voucher and its attachments appear to meet the criteria for a proper voucher (e.g., the trip was authorized and performed; the appropriate receipts/ticket stubs and other documentation appear to be in order and are attached to the voucher; and the traveler has signed the voucher certifying its correctness), then the voucher should be signed by the approving official as soon as possible (within two workdays of submission by the traveler and forwarded to the paying office is desired).
- If the voucher is incomplete or otherwise fails to meet the criteria for a proper voucher, the approving official will return it to the employee within 7 calendar days from the date the voucher was received in the designated approving office.
- The employee will correct/complete the travel voucher and resubmit it to the approving official with a new signature and date.
- The clock for late payment is reset to zero, and restarts when the proper voucher is received in the designated approving office.

4. Approving officials(or designees) submit the voucher to the paying office for review/audit and for traveler payment. Because of the 30 day requirement for payment, it is necessary that approving officials sign a proper travel voucher within 1 or 2 days of receipt.

5. The Finance Office date stamps voucher upon receipt.

6. The Finance Office reviews/audits the voucher. If the voucher is incomplete it may be returned to the traveler with an explanation of why the voucher was considered insufficient to pay. If returned, the Finance Office will record the date that the voucher was returned, and the number of days that have elapsed since the voucher was approved by the approving official. This information will be entered into a tracking log and used to determine payment due date when the traveler returns the additional information. The employee provides the additional information and returns the voucher directly to the

Finance Office. The tracking process continues upon receipt of the voucher in the Finance Office.

7. If payment is scheduled such that it would be received beyond 30 days from the date the voucher was signed by the approving official, a late payment fee will be automatically added to the travel reimbursement that the employee was otherwise entitled to receive, as follows:

Amount of Claim	28 -57 <sup>th</sup> Day	58-87 <sup>th</sup> Day	88-117 <sup>th</sup> Day	118-147 <sup>th</sup> Day	148-177 <sup>th</sup> Day	178-207 <sup>th</sup> Day	208+ Days
\$1 - \$500	\$5	\$10	\$15	\$40	\$65	\$90	\$115
\$500.01 +	\$10	\$20	\$30	\$60	\$90	\$120	\$150

Table Assumptions:

- All payments are made by electronic funds transfer (EFT).
- “Amount of Claim” for relocation travel is based on en route and house hunting trips only.
- Table allows 2 days for EFT payment to be processed to traveler’s bank account.
- On the 118<sup>th</sup> Day, the table includes \$20 additional for amount that could be charged by Bank of America.
- On the 148<sup>th</sup> Day, the table includes \$40 additional for amount that could be charged by Bank of America.
- On 178<sup>th</sup> Day table includes \$60 additional for amount that could be charged by Bank of America.
- On 208<sup>th</sup> Day table includes \$80 additional for amount that could be charged by Bank of America.

Note:

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has ruled that late payments of the type accruing through day 117 above, constitute an interest payment, and must be reported annually on IRS Form 1099-INT. Every effort should be made by Bureau Finance Offices to ensure that travel reimbursement vouchers are paid before day 118, since the incremental \$20 penalty in subsequent monthly late payment fees thereafter constitutes W-2 earnings to employees, which would require additional Payroll Office reporting.

8. An employee may submit a supplemental claim for Bank of America late penalties and/or Interior’s late payment penalty if he/she believes that these were not correctly paid.